

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



**Music at Kohl Mansion Presents**

***VIOLINS OF HOPE* SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA**

**A Rare Assemblage of 50 Restored Holocaust-Era Violins**

**Set for West Coast Debut in Eight-Week Residency**

**January 16 – March 15, 2020**

**Uniting 41 San Francisco Bay Area Organizations With**

**Concerts, Exhibitions, Lectures, Films, and Community Forums;**

**Special Commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day,**

**Coinciding with 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz,**

**Set for January 27 at San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El**

**Residency Highlights Include Special Guest Appearances by  
Acclaimed Israeli Father & Son Luthiers Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein;**

**Award-Winning Author of *Violins of Hope* James A. Grymes;**

**Commissioned World Premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's**

***Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope***

**Featuring Mezzo-Soprano Sasha Cooke, Violinist Daniel Hope and String Quartet;**

**"Along the Trade Route" Concerts of Folk and Klezmer Traditions;**

**Exhibitions at War Memorial Veterans Gallery, Peninsula JCC and New Museum Los Gatos;**

**Performances by New Century Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony,**

**Oakland Symphony, Peninsula Symphony, and Bay Area Rainbow Symphony**

***Violins of Hope* San Francisco Bay Area Video: <https://vimeo.com/329268655>**

**<https://musicatkohl.org>**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (June 14, 2019) — **Music at Kohl Mansion**, one of the Bay Area's leading presenters of international chamber music programs, today announced further details of its unprecedented plans to present the iconic *Violins of Hope*, a rare assemblage of 50 restored Holocaust-era string instruments, in their West Coast debut spanning eight weeks beginning January 16 through March 15, 2020. This unique residency will include 41 organizations from

eight Bay Area counties offering concerts, exhibitions, lectures, film screenings, ecumenical services, interfaith dialogues, and community forums focusing on the power and symbolism of these priceless historic instruments.

The residency of the *Violins of Hope* San Francisco Bay Area will coincide with the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the notorious Auschwitz concentration camp on January 27, one of the many death sites where Jewish musicians were forcibly directed to perform in camp orchestras, small ensembles or individually on their instruments while bearing witness to unspeakable atrocities.

Special to the San Francisco Bay Area presentation will be the appearance of Israeli father and son luthiers, **Amnon** and **Avshalom Weinstein**, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation violin makers and the co-founders of the *Violins of Hope* initiative. What began as a modest effort with one or two violins in their Tel Aviv atelier in 1996 has now grown into a collection of over 70 recovered and restored instruments that have toured concert halls and exhibition centers in Europe and the United States. Both father and son will be presented in various San Francisco Bay Area public forums speaking about their handcrafted work with each violin, reflecting on the provenance of these instruments, and the impact these instruments have had today with communities in Europe and the U.S.

In anticipation of the San Francisco Bay Area residency, Avshalom (Avshi) Weinstein shared, “It will be the first time the *Violins of Hope* collection will be on the West Coast of America, and we very much look forward to this important occasion. Each city we have visited has found new aspects and new ways to showcase these instruments. In Europe, the memory is a bit stronger, as they lived it. Almost every family there was involved in the war in some way, but the generations are changing. The most important aspect is to make sure we don’t forget, so that hopefully, we won’t make the same mistakes again.”

“It is a great privilege for Music at Kohl Mansion to present the iconic *Violins of Hope*, a breathtaking and powerful collection of recovered and restored string instruments of the Holocaust,” said Executive Director **Patricia Kristof Moy**. “It is our hope that with this eight-week residency of over 40 participating organizations, we will not only be reminded of the shameful past of how these violins were used, but that anew, these violins will serve as life-affirming symbols fostering important discussions on peace, human dignity, and ultimately, as a musical bridge of grace and compassion throughout our diverse Bay Area.”

The eight-week project will be further distinguished by the presence of **James A. Grymes**, noted musicologist and author of the award-winning book *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust – Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind’s Darkest Hour*. Grymes will join the Weinstains for public speaking engagements at the San Mateo Public Library, the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco and various private and public Bay Area schools. Violinist **Hannah**

**Tarley** will join Grymes and the Weinsteins offering a performance on select instruments from the *Violins of Hope* collection.

*Violins of Hope* San Francisco Bay Area Co-chairs **Katherine and Roy Bukstein** commented, "The *Violins of Hope* programs will deeply impact a myriad of communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. The physical presence of these unique instruments, the music they will inspire along with their stories of the Holocaust, will surely bring all who are touched by them closer to understanding the power of hope."

### **Music Concerts**

As previously announced and a notable highlight of the project, Music at Kohl Mansion has commissioned award-winning composer/librettist team **Jake Heggie** and **Gene Scheer** for a chamber work appropriate to the occasion, *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*. Performing in this world premiere will be renowned opera and concert star, mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**, world acclaimed violinist **Daniel Hope**, and a string quartet comprised of members of the **San Francisco Opera Orchestra**. Each musician will be performing on one of the historic string instruments from the *Violins of Hope* collection. The creation of this new work was made possible, in part, by a Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions grant by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

"Both Gene and I are profoundly moved by the stories of these violins, and [they] immediately got our imaginations going," said Jake Heggie. "There are so many stories to tell. I see in this project an opportunity to gather and engage a broad spectrum of communities on the West Coast for something beautiful, moving, historic and educational, with an important message for today." This world premiere by Heggie and Scheer is the third commissioned work by Music at Kohl Mansion following earlier commissions by **Ernst Bacon** (1986) and **David Carlson** (1993).

Under the auspices of Music at Kohl Mansion, a very special program commemorating **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** on January 27 will occur at San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El. Plans at this time include remarks by *Violins of Hope* co-founders Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein, in addition to performances by the New Century Chamber Orchestra led by pianist **Simone Dinnerstein**, and excerpts of Heggie and Scheer's newly commissioned chamber work, *Intonations*, performed by guest violinist Hannah Tarley and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra String Quartet.

During the eight-week residency, concerts will be given by **San Francisco Symphony's Chamber Musicians, New Century Chamber Orchestra, Oakland Symphony, Peninsula Symphony Orchestra, Bay Area Rainbow Symphony, Ariel Quartet**, and the **Young Chamber Musicians** of Burlingame. For each of these concerts, violinists will be performing on recovered and restored instruments previously owned or played by a prisoner from one of the ghettos or Nazi labor concentration camps.

Other musical concerts will include *Along the Trade Route*, a musical exploration of shared melodies from over the centuries with no regard to political and national boundaries. Specific musical traditions to be examined include those of the Turks, Roma, Jews, Celts, South Asian and North Americans. Led by Cookie Segelstein, all performances will feature internationally renowned musicians performing on historic instruments from the *Violins of Hope* collection.

### **Exhibitions**

Complementing the many music performances, the *Violins of Hope* residency will include three fascinating and insightful public exhibitions. The Peninsula Jewish Community Center will present a special photography exhibition by Daniel Levin, *The Weinstains' Workshop: The Luthiers Who Restored the Violins of the Holocaust*, offering an insider's perspective into Weinstains' eclectic workshop and forensic-like approach to restoring these Holocaust-era strings. In Los Gatos at the New Museum (NUMU), *In the Artist's Studio: The Violin Workshop of Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein* will offer a recreation of the Weinstein's atelier in Tel Aviv.

Central to the exhibitions will be *A Journey of Heroism, Healing and Humanity* presented at the San Francisco War Memorial Veterans Building in cooperation with American Legion War Memorial Commission, with special assistance from San Francisco State University's Global Museum and the Helen and Joe Farkas Center for the Study of the Holocaust in Catholic Schools. Plans call for a display of 26 violins from the collection sharing stories of their difficult history and emotional journey toward their restoration in addition to relevant ephemera about the Holocaust.

All three exhibitions will offer unique educational opportunities for students, social justice and faith-based organizations, and congregations to learn about this period of systematic hatred and bigotry in order to prevent this from re-occurring locally and globally. Related exhibits will bring context and focus to the Bay Area's history on human rights campaigns, contemporary issues of injustice, racial and religious discrimination and the horrors of genocide.

### **Participating Organizations**

American Legion War Memorial Commission; Bay Area Rainbow Symphony; Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music; Carmel Jewish Film Festival; Congregation Beth Am, Palo Alto; Congregation B'nai Shalom, Walnut Creek; Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco; Congregation Etz Chayim, Palo Alto; Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto; Congregation Sinai, San Jose; Congregational Church of San Mateo; Consulate General of Israel to the Pacific Northwest; Contemporary Jewish Museum; Facing History and Ourselves; Farkas Center for the Study of the Holocaust in Catholic Schools; Grace Cathedral, San Francisco; Jewish Community Center - East Bay, Berkeley; Jewish Community Center of San Francisco; Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center; Klez California; The Lark Theater, Larkspur; Mercy High School, Burlingame; Music at Kohl Mansion, Burlingame; Music of Remembrance, Seattle; Napa Center for Thought and Culture; New Century Chamber Orchestra; New Museum of Los Gatos; Oakland

Symphony Orchestra; Osher Marin Jewish Community Center, San Rafael; Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, Palo Alto; Peninsula Jewish Community Center, Foster City; Peninsula Symphony Orchestra; San Francisco Interfaith Council; San Francisco Public Library; San Francisco State University; San Francisco Symphony; San Mateo Public Library; St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Albany; Under One Tent, Contra Costa & Tri Valley Jewish Book & Arts Festival; Veretski Pass, Berkeley; and Young Chamber Musicians, Burlingame.

### **The *Violins of Hope* Story and Collection**

For Jews enduring unimaginable evil during the Holocaust, music offered a haven and humanity. The strains of a beloved song supplied solace, even if only for a few moments. In some cases, the ability to play the violin spared Jewish musicians from grueling labors or death. They literally played for their lives: "We played for sheer survival. We made music in hell," recalled camp musician Heinz "Coco" Schumann.

Nearly 50 years ago, Amnon Weinstein, an internationally renowned violin-maker in Tel Aviv, heard a story from a customer who brought in an instrument for restoration. The customer survived the Holocaust because his job was to play the violin while Nazi soldiers marched others to their deaths. When Weinstein opened the violin, he saw ashes inside. Remembering the 400 hundred members of his own extended family who perished in the Holocaust, he was overwhelmed and knew he needed to seek out and restore other stringed instruments with stories like this one, but could not bring himself to begin the project. But by 1996, Weinstein was ready. He put out a call and began locating violins that were played in the camps and ghettos. Word of Weinstein's work spread. Instruments were brought to his studio, where Amnon and his son Avshalom meticulously brought each one back to life.

### ***Violins of Hope* World Tour to Date**

The *Violins of Hope* made their North American debut in 2012 with performances in Charlotte, NC, and have subsequently been played in concert halls, synagogues, churches, universities, theaters and other venues in Cleveland, Birmingham, Nashville, Knoxville, Sarasota, Jacksonville, Houston, Louisville, Cincinnati, Phoenix, and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In Europe, the *Violins of Hope* have been featured in concerts in Berlin, Monaco, Paris, Istanbul, London, Rome, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Following their Bay Area engagement, the *Violins of Hope* will travel to Los Angeles beginning March 22.

### ***Violins of Hope* San Francisco Bay Area Financial Support**

Funding of *Violins of Hope* San Francisco Bay Area is made possible, in part, by major support provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Walter & Elise Haas Fund, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation, Inc., the Fleishhacker Foundation, and an anonymous Foundation; and by major contributions from Diane B. Wilsey, Terry and Victoria Rosen, Carlstrom Productions, Kenneth Gundry and Susan Kasdan Gundry, Donna Dubinsky and Len Shustek, Roy and Katherine Bukstein, Daniel Springer and Lisa Coscino,

David Anderson and Judy Preves Anderson, Stephen and Diane Heiman, Joseph and Bette Hirsch, Frank and Linda Kurtz, David and Julie Levine, and Abby Smith Rumsey. Additional leadership support has been generously provided by the Consulate General of Israel to the Pacific Northwest.

### **About Music at Kohl Mansion**

Located in the 1914 Burlingame estate of Frederick and Bessie Kohl, Music at Kohl Mansion was founded in 1983 to offer quality chamber concerts on the San Francisco Peninsula. The mansion's Great Hall, built specifically for chamber music performance, offers excellent acoustics, size, and atmosphere, making it a superb chamber music venue for audiences and performers alike.

The 2019-20 season marks Music at Kohl Mansion's 37th consecutive year of presenting chamber concerts by national and international touring artists. Located just 15 miles south of San Francisco, Kohl Mansion is a favorite destination for chamber music lovers from throughout the Bay Area. The quality of performers and repertoire has built a loyal following for the series over the years. Concert-goers praise the "Music at Kohl experience," where world-class artistry is enhanced by the exceptional venue, warm ambiance, affordable ticket prices, easy accessibility, free parking, friendly patrons, and complimentary post-concert receptions. Music at Kohl Mansion also has a distinguished reputation among musicians both for the outstanding performance space and the discerning audience.

**Kohl for Kids** music education programs have served over 100,000 San Mateo county public school students since their inception in 1992. MAKM also makes live music widely accessible through admission-free presentations at libraries, community centers, senior facilities and other public spaces. "We continuously seek ways to live our mission of community-building through music, demonstrating that art can act as a vehicle for common understanding" says former Board President and Founder **Liz Dossa**.

Music at Kohl Mansion is an independent non-profit, 501 (c) (3) charitable organization operating in collaboration with and on the campus of Mercy High School, Burlingame.

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**High-resolution downloadable photographs and video of *Violins of Hope* are available at <https://musicatkohl.org> and <https://vimeo.com/329268655>**

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